

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SP-03 SS-20 NSCE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 SAB-01 EB-11

CCO-00 OTPE-00 FCC-03 OC-06 COME-00 USPS-02 DRC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 741

INFO US MISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 66

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 3010

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PN, PFOR

SUBJ: ITU WMARC - PANAMA CANAL

REF: STATE 105398

SUMMARY. EMBASSY OFFICER HAS DISCUSSED WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL THE PANAMANIAN PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE RADIO FREQUENCY SYMBOL IN THE CANAL ZONE, AND HAD PREVIOUSLY MADE SIMILAR REPRESENTATION ON THE ISSUE OF CANAL ZONE POSTAL STAMPS. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT GOP WOULD CONSIDER U S VIEWS, THE RESPONSES HAVE INDICATED THAT PANAMA IS DETERMINED TO CONTINUE TO APPLY PRESSURE ON THE U S TO ELIMINATE WHAT IT CONSIDERS TO BE VIOLATIONS OF THE 1903 TREATY. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAS BEEN INCOMMUNICADO SINCE HIS RETURN FROM THE U S MAY 21; THEREFORE, DUE TO THE URGENCY OF THE MATTER, I SENT POLITICAL OFFICER BLACKEN TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF CANAL ZONE RADIO FREQUENCY WITH CARLOS GARAY, DIRECTOR OF THE MINISTRY'S DEPARTMENT OF RELATIONS WITH THE US. THE U S POSITION ON CANAL ZONE POSTAL STAMPS HAD BEEN PRESENTED AT
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THIS SAME LEVEL PREVIOUSLY. GARAY LISTENED AND TOOK NOTE OF

THE VARIOUS POINTS OF THE US POSITION AS OUTLINED IN REFTEL, INTERRUPTING ONCE TO EMPHASIZE PANAMA'S POSITION THAT THE CANAL ZONE POSTAL SYSTEM AND THE USE OF A SEPARATE RADIO SYMBOL FOR THE CANAL ZONE WERE USURPATIONS OF PANAMA'S SOVEREIGNTY. BLACKEN POINTED OUT THAT THE U S WAS AWARE OF AND RESPECTED PANAMA'S VIEWS ON THESE ISSUES, BUT THAT IN THE INTEREST OF THE ONGOING CANAL NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH WE BELIEVED WERE PROGRESSING, WE HOPED THAT PANAMA AND THE U S COULD AVOID A PUBLIC CONFRONTATION OVER JURISDICTIONAL ISSUES AT GENEVA.

2. GARAY PROMISED TO BRING THE MATTER TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE "GOOD JUDGMENT" OF THE U S SUGGESTION CONCERNING THE PROPOSED RESOLUTION (SEE REFTEL) BUT ADDED THAT HIS CONVERSATION WITH TOP OFFICIALS FOLLOWING OUR EARLIER PRESENTATION OF THE POSTAL STAMP ISSUE MADE HIM DOUBTFUL THAT ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGE WOULD BE MADE IN THE PANAMANIAN POSITION.

3. GARAY, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, SAID THE U S SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF ISSUES CONCERNING THE U S-PANAMANIAN RELATIONSHIP OVER THE CANAL: (1) THOSE WHICH CONCERNED RIGHTS WHICH THE U S HAD RECEIVED UNDER THE 1903 TREATY; AND (2) THOSE WHICH DERIVED FROM ERRONEOUS INTERPRETATIONS BY THE U S OF THE 1903 TREATY. THE POSTAL SYSTEM AND THE RADIO FREQUENCY ISSUES WERE TWO EXAMPLES OF THE LATTER. PANAMA WOULD NOT DESIST FROM ITS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE A FAIR INTERPRETATION OF THE TREATY. BLACKEN REPEATED THAT ALL PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE CANAL ZONE SHOULD BE THE SUBJECT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.

4. ON MAY 21 NEWSPAPERS HERE CARRIED REPORTS OF A STATEMENT MADE IN MADRID BY PANAMA'S DELEGATE TO THE UPU CONGRESS, MINISTER OF JUSTICE JUAN MATERNO VASQUEZ, WHICH PARALLELED GARAY'S EXPLANATION OF PANAMA'S POSITION. VASQUEZ REPORTEDLY SAID: "THIS (THE POSTAL STAMP ISSUE) IS A PROBLEM THAT WE DO NOT LINK TO TREATY NEGOTIATIONS BUT WHICH, LOGICALLY, FORM PART OF OUR BATTLE FOR ANTI-COLONIALIST LIBERATION WITH RESPECT TO THIS ENCLAVE WHICH IS CALLED THE CANAL ZONE. THEY NEVER SHOULD HAVE ISSUED STAMPS WITH THIS NAME AND MUCH LESS SHOULD THIS ZONE BE A MEMBER OF THE POSTAL UNION. THIS HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MANY ARBITRARY INTERPRETATIONS MADE TO CONVERT WHAT WAS SIMPLY A STRIP

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OF TERRITORY ALONG THE EDGE OF THE CANAL TO A CONCEPT OF A GOVERNMENT WITHIN ANOTHER GOVERNMENT."

5. DURING A LUNCHEON DISCUSSION IN WHICH EMOFF RAISED THE POSTAL STAMP AND RADIO FREQUENCY ISSUES, A MEMBER OF THE MINISTER'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISORY COUNCIL STRESSED POINT THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS HAD BEEN DRAGGING ON FOR YEARS AND THE END WAS NOT YET IN SIGHT; THEREFORE REGARDLESS OF HOW WELL THE

NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT BE PROGRESSING AT THE MOMENT, PANAMA MUST CONTINUE HER EFFORTS TO CHANGE THE STATUS QUO. HE ARGUED THAT AMERICANS HAVE A SENSE OF JUSTICE AND PANAMA HAD TO TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PUBLICIZE THE INEQUITIES OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE CANAL ZONE. INITIATIVES SUCH AS THE ONES PANAMA WAS NOW TAKING IN GENEVA WOULD IN THE LONG RUN HELP, NOT HINDER, THE NEGOTIATIONS.

6. COMMENT. IT APPEARS THAT THE PANAMANIANIS ARE DETERMINED TO PUSH THE POSTAL STAMP AND RADIO FREQUENCY ISSUES. IN VIEW OF THIS THE POSITIONS OF THE OTHER DELEGATIONS IN GENEVA, IF AND WHEN THE TWO ISSUES COME TO A VOTE, WILL BE A DETERMINING FACTOR.

JORDEN

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